

6D REAL ESTATE

Tear the roof off repairs

If you have a roof leak, the problem may not be as bad as you fear.

Don't replace the roof if it is not necessary. You may be able to squeeze a few more years out of it through simple repairs and delay this extensive maintenance expense. Minor damage to shingles can sometimes be repaired easily and inexpensively. Shingles that have lifted from the roof surface can simply be nailed down.

High winds can tear off your roof's shingles, particularly if your roof has become brittle with age. Extreme weather conditions can also have damaging effect on your roof's life expectancy. It is important to address damaged shingles before this minor problem develops into a larger more expensive one.

When cleaning gutters, take the opportunity to check your roof for cracks, curling and split shingles. It's advisable to periodically go up in the attic and check for signs of water penetration, either with signs of dampness, stains or discolorations. Damaged sections should be checked thoroughly from the exterior since they are indications that water has penetrated the roof's cover.

Once water penetrates, it flows along the sheathing and the roof rafting until it drips into the house and/or behind the sheetrock. If these leaks are not corrected in a timely fashion, water can cause sufficient concealed damage.

Trapped moisture is conducive to development of mold. While most spores lie dormant for years, excessive moisture causes spores to germinate and mold to grow. Mold is everywhere hidden or visible, depending on the presence of moisture. These fungi can be seen on trees outside your home or in your refrigerator on old food.

Molds are usually not a problem, unless spores land on a wet or damp spot and begin growing. Molds have the potential to cause health problems. Indoor molds produce allergens that can cause allergic reactions, irritants, and in some cases, potentially toxic substances.

In addition to the damage intrusive water can cause to a home's structure, moisture creates a conducive condition for attracting termite infestation.

Maintenance of one's roof can sometimes be simply hammering down a few nail pops. Once secured, the nails need to be sealed with roofing cement. Cracked, warped, missing or broken shingles are not something to repair; instead, they should be replaced. First you must evaluate whether you should re-roof yourself or hire a professional. The latter may be a prudent decision, especially if you have a steeply pitched roof.

If you decide to hire a contractor, it's advisable to shop around. If possible, obtain three or more personal referrals and ask all contractors for estimates. It's prudent to only interview contractors who are licensed and insured.

There are other roofing materials that can be used to cover a home. No matter which type of cover you select, it's a good idea to watch out for little leaks. Small leaks can turn into bigger expenditures if not caught and corrected in a timely manner.

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ROLAND HAWKINS

Brighter ideas for today's kitchen



PHOTO/ARA CONTENT

Natural lighting helps illuminate state of the art kitchens.

ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

Lighter and brighter is a winning combination in many rooms, but in the kitchen it's a must since that's one of the most used rooms in most homes.

Experts say to lighten cabinets, countertops, walls and floors and you're half way there. Add one or more skylights to fill the room with healthful, balanced natural light, plus more ventilation, and you've economically upgraded one of the most used areas of your home. And skylights don't take up wall space like vertical windows so you can have more space for shelves or cabinets or for decorating.

According to Joe Patrick, senior product manager with VELUX America, light from above makes all rooms more functional and livable. "But kitchens are especially enjoyable for family and guests when they are bright, cheerful, and free of cooking odors, heat and humidity," he says.

Venting skylights in the kitchen release hot air, moisture, and odors while admitting additional light for more pleasant cooking, dining and entertaining. And skylights, along with accessories including blinds and shades, can be controlled manually or by remote control with the touch of a button. Electrochromic glass is also available in skylights. This new technology allows homeowners to lighten and darken the glass with the touch of a remote and the view of the sky is never lost.

The trend toward additional daylighting in kitchens is driven not only by homeowner

desires for bright, open, energy-efficient spaces, but also health considerations. Adding more natural light to the kitchen, where families tend to gather much of the time for studying and socializing, in addition to dining, has many health benefits.

Studies show that Seasonal Affective Disorder, evidenced by emotional depression, a drop in physical energy, increased appetite, and need for more sleep, is directly linked to a lack of sufficient daylight. Also, we need vitamin D for calcium to be absorbed by the body to strengthen teeth, bones and tissue to maintain a healthy skeleton throughout life. Two sources of vitamin D are diet and sunlight and in healthy human bodies, 80 percent of vitamin D is produced in the skin when it is exposed to natural light.

Lighting designers and other housing professionals can help homeowners select a combination of natural and artificial lighting methods that will make kitchens even more pleasant and functional. Balanced lighting is the key.

And now is a particularly good time to consider upgrading existing skylights or adding new units to qualify for a tax credit of up to \$200 under the Energy Tax Incentives Act of 2005. Details are available at www.energy.gov/taxbreaks.htm.

For information on natural light and skylight selection call (800) 283-2831 or visit www.veluxusa.com. For government information on window and skylight energy efficiency visit www.energystar.gov, and for independent agency information visit www.nfrc.org or www.efficientwindows.org.

Keep house cool during dog days

ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

It's not easy keeping a house cool during the long, hot, dog-days of summer, but according to interior design experts at The Art Institutes, there are steps you can take to not only make your house cooler, but also more environmentally-friendly, energy-efficient and enjoyable to be in.

Start with windows. Even in the summer, homeowners want to experience the long days of daylight the warmer months bring, but old or inexpensive windows can make a house hot by allowing heat to transfer into rooms.

Mishelle Lewis of the interior design faculty at The Art Institute of Atlanta explains, "If you want your home to be cooler in the summer, and warmer in the winter, good quality vinyl or wood windows can make a significant impact on your home's energy efficiency."

Look for windows that use low e-glazing on the glass, she says, which cuts down on UV's and heat transferring from the outside.

Consider horizontal blinds or shutters on both interior and exterior windows, says Christopher Priest, academic director of interior design at The Art Institute International Minnesota. "When using blinds or shutters, position them so the sunlight is directed upwards towards the ceiling. This imitates the effect of a skylight by providing indirect, natural light indoors with little impact on cooling cost," he says.

Wood blinds and shutters make the best choice because metal blinds can actually conduct heat into a room.

Fans are another popular way to cool a home when air conditioning is not an option. According to William B. Lanigan, chair of the interior design department at The Art Institute of Houston, "Fans are a cost effective and efficient way to cool the house. Heat rises so fans help disperse the heat and circulate air. It's all about air circulation when you are trying to beat the heat in the summer."

Don't forget lighting. Lewis recommends minimizing overhead lighting. "If you are reading or doing a task, use a lamp instead of turning on an overhead light," she says. Every time you turn on an overhead light, "You not only burn energy through the light source but the incandescent light bulbs produce heat that your AC must now work harder to cool."

Lewis also likes compact fluorescent lighting which has "come a long way." Daylight bulbs are bright and white, but there are also soft tones which are closer to the standard incandescent light bulb. Compact fluorescent light bulbs use less energy and produce less heat.

As for fabric and colors, Jerry Van Slambrouck, an instructor in the Interior Design department at The Art Institute of California - San Francisco, subscribes to the British tradition of using light colored fabric slip covers over furniture in the summer. "This is true for floor coverings as well," says Van Slambrouck. "Wool, oriental carpets are rolled up in the summer and light colored sisal area rugs replace them."

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